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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2007

In Today's Papers

Trabzon Governor, Police Chief Sacked over Dink Murder
All papers report Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu removed from office Governor Huseyin Yavuzdemir and police chief Resat Altay in Trabzon province, home of the suspects in the murder of the Turkish-Armenian editor Hrant Dink. Istanbul's chief prosecutor Aykut Cengiz Engin charged a sixth suspect, Erhan Tuncel, on Friday with being a member of an armed gang. Papers speculate that Tuncel, mentioned as one of the key actors behind the murder, was in fact an informant working for the police and that his warning that there was a plot to kill Dink was ignored.

Meanwhile on Sunday a ferryboat which sails between Lapseki and Gelibolu in the Dardanelles Strait was hijacked by Nihat Acar. Acar, a former soldier removed from duty, was angered by pro-Armenian slogans chanted at the funeral of Hrant Dink, passengers said. He threatened to blow up the ferry and held the captain of the ship hostage for almost two hours before surrendering.

Controversy Continues on Article 301
All weekend papers, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, Radikal: Sunday's Radikal quoted FM Gul as saying that "changes in Article 301 could come to the agenda at any time. PM Erdogan attaches big importance to this issue. Nobody has ever been jailed under Article 301, but I am for the amendment of the provision because it overshadows reforms in Turkey." Speaking to the press prior to his departure to Ethiopia for the African Union summit, PM Erdogan said that "we don't plan of a complete annulment of article 301. Items included in the first and second paragraphs should be assessed properly. One can not disregard them. On the other hand we are open to any proposal on amendment. I had talks with NGOs on this matter, but we saw that there are disagreements among NGOs. If they reach a compromise and make a proposal, we will assess it." Milliyet reports that government spokesman-Justice Minister Cemil Cicek said that Article 301 is not a top priority in Turkey's agenda. Saturday's Radikal carried the remarks of EU enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn saying

"Turkey has to annul or amend article 301; this is the best way to honor Hrant Dink, who devoted his life to freedom of expression."

Patriarch Mesrob II on the Situation of Armenians in Turkey

In an interview with the Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak, Mesrob II, the Patriarch of Armenians in Turkey, said the assassination of Hrant Dink was actually a message to the Armenians in the country to "keep their voices down." "Dink's paper Agos and some Armenian priests still receive email threats, and hate slogans have been written on the wall of our church. The Istanbul Governor's Office has assigned a guard to protect me. You cannot call all these normal," said Mesrob II. He expressed hope that the Armenian government proposal for establishing with Turkey ties without preconditions will lead to a new opening. "Judging, however, by the messages issued we can say that the Turkish government has been caught unprepared," added Mesrob II. He noted that the democratization process speeding up in Turkey will reduce the hardships Turkey's Armenians have been encountering: "We don't have any problems with the Turkish people, except for times when provocations are made around the world or when some press members or politicians lead the nation toward a certain end. We can resolve disagreements through dialogue. It's true that we have expectations from the state regarding our foundations, schools, and churches. Our biggest problem is, we don't have an authority in Ankara for dealing solely with our problems," emphasized the Patriarch.

Turkey-Armenia Business Chief Calls for Opening Bordergate

On Sunday the mass-appeal/sensationalist Star interviewed Kaan Soyak, the cochairman of Turkey-Armenia Business Development Council. Soyak said the idea to invite Armenian diaspora members to the funeral of Hrant Dink came from Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul. Soyak said a 70-year old Armenian coming to Turkey for the first

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time for the funeral said it was "the shock of his life" to hear "hundreds of thousands of Turks shouting 'We're all Hrant Dink, We're all Armenians.'" "If Turkey wants a solution to the Armenian problem," Soyak noted, "It will be with Armenia, not in international platforms. We should initiate dialogue for a solution, which will be supported by the majority of Armenians. Since there is no dialogue between the two capitals, NGOs such as us strive for the establishment of such a channel." He also said keeping the bordergate with Armenia closed helped nothing but served to radicalize neighboring Armenians, increasing the aid flowing into Armenia from the diaspora. "We continue trade ties with Armenia through Georgia, which amounts to about USD 100 million. We have suggested the friendship caucuses in the US Congress pass legislation for establishing qualified industrial zones among Turkey-Armenia-US, which will enable Armenian and Turkish textile products to enter the US without customs duties," said Soyak, underlining that leading Armenians predict Armenian lobbies will shift to Turkey's side for support once the ties smoothen. "If the border crossing opens, at least 100,000 diaspora Armenians will visit their homeland through Turkey. They want to stay in Turkey for a couple of days. Armenians have a longing for Turkish land, but not for settlement, just for seeing their villages and towns," said Soyak.

Iraq Angers Turkey by Referring Oil Trade to Kurds

All papers report Turkish companies carrying refined petroleum to Iraq have been told by Iraq's national petroleum company SOMO to discuss business details with Kurdish officials in northern Iraq. The shipment of oil to Iraq via the Habur border gate has been suspended. SOMO has sent a letter to Turkish companies saying that their deals for the shipment of oil and oil products expired on December 31. SOMO has refused to renew the contracts of Turkish companies, saying they should get in touch with authorities in northern Iraq if they wanted their agreements renewed. State Minister Kursad Tuzmen stressed that Turkey recognizes a united Iraq, and that would deal only with the Iraqi government in Baghdad with regard to oil issues. In reaction, Ankara halted refined oil products transport to Iraq, say papers.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq

Rusen Cakir, writing from Washington in the mass appeal Vatan, argues that the US maintains a double standard when it comes to the

PKK and Iran: "The President's State of the Union address was a clear indication of the losing situation in Iraq. Bush is asking for one more chance. The fact of the matter is that if the situation in Iraq is a matter of chances, then it means it's finished. An optimistic American on the fate of Iraq is very hard to find nowadays. On the fight against terrorism the US is still maintaining a double standard. The US always gives two reasons for the lack of an effective fight against the PKK presence in northern Iraq: 1) The US has other priorities in Iraq and forces cannot be divided; 2) The US insists that Turkey has to convince Iraqis, especially the Kurds, on this issue first. Yet when it comes to Iran, the US does not listen to what Iraqis are saying and opens new fronts without hesitation."

Huseyin Bas, writing in the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet, maintains that the US has plans for permanent bases in Iraq: "President Bush's new strategy is designed to finish the job with an additional 21,000 soldiers and it is being implemented even though Democrats oppose it. Financing the new strategy will be the hardest goal to achieve, yet it is not impossible in the long run. Democrats remain opposed to the new strategy and they can control the financing process. However they cannot maintain their opposition until the bitter end because public opinion will not be sympathetic to cutting off financing for American soldiers serving in Iraq. The new plan is basically aimed at establishing gradual stability, using the Iraqi army along with US troops. This will end up with the permanent presence of the US in Iraq. The total of 55 military bases, some under construction, around Iraq will provide

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enough facilities for the US to remain in Iraq for good."

Greek Cypriot Plans to Search for Oil

Milliyet (1/28), Cumhuriyet: The Greek Cypriots' attempt to search for oil in 2001 was stopped by the arrival of a Turkish frigate in the island and the crisis was kept secret from the public. However, recently, Greek Cypriots took initiative openly by signing an agreement with Egypt and Lebanon for oil and gas exploration. Turkish Cypriot "President" Mehmet Ali Talat said that the resources in Cyprus should be used by the two communities of the island and warned that contrary developments would fuel tensions in Cyprus. Greek-Cypriot Foreign Minister George Lillikas said that Cyprus has every right to exploit any and all resources that rightfully belong to it, and it is not obliged to share these with anyone else.

TV News:
(NTV, 7.00 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul warned at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos that a fragmentation of Iraq would have grave consequences for the region.
- Syria's Foreign Minister Walid Muallem will visit Turkey this week.
- Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan rejected charges that he threatened an inspector investigating the business dealings of Saudi financier Yasin al-Qadi in Turkey.
- World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz said Turkey's economic development was "a story of success."
- The Bolu Mountain tunnel between Ankara and Istanbul, which was opened last week, has been closed after two accidents.

International News

- Saddam Hussein's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majeed, known as "Chemical Ali," told a court trying him for genocide he had ordered 20 Kurdish villages cleared in the 1988 Anfal campaign.
- US Congressman Joseph Crowley (D-NY) is expected to introduce a bill condemning the murder of journalist Hrant Dink, also asking

Turkey to protect free speech and abolish the controversial Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code.

- Britain's Sunday Times reported a former senior Iraqi minister said most of the leaders loyal to the radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr had fled to Iran.

- An Iranian nuclear agency official has denied claims made by a senior legislator that the Islamic Republic had begun installing 3,000 centrifuges at an uranium-enrichment plant.

- 18 civilians have been killed in two car blasts in Kirkuk in northern Iraq.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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